

SENATE—Friday, December 8, 2000*(Legislative day of Friday, September 22, 2000)*

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Lord God, speak to us so that what we speak may have the ring of reality and the tenor of truth. You have granted the Senators the gift of words. May they use this gift wisely today. Help them to speak words that inspire and instruct. Enable them to say what they mean and then mean what they say, so that they are able to stand by their words with integrity. And since the world listens so carefully to what is said and watches how it is said, may the Senators judge each other's ideas but never each other's value. In this way, may the Senate exemplify to the world how to maintain unity in diversity and the bond of patriotism in the search for Your best for America. Help us to listen to You and to each other. In Your all-powerful name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CRAIG THOMAS, a Senator from the State of Wyoming, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the Senate will be in a period for morning business until 10:30 a.m. It is expected the House will vote this morning on a continuing resolution that funds the Government through Monday, December 11. The Senate will have a voice vote on the resolution as soon as it is received from the House. Therefore, no votes will occur during today's session of the Senate. On Monday, an additional CR will be necessary. However, it is hoped that a vote will not be needed on that resolution on Monday. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STELLER SEA LION BIOLOGICAL OPINION

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I have come to the floor because, as we are considering the final wrapup of the appropriations bills, I face the problem of having to modify a provision that was in a bill as we were ready to send it to the President before the election dealing with Steller sea lions.

It is sort of a long story, but let me start from the beginning.

In 1969, as a new Senator, I flew from Kodiak to the Pribilof Islands in a Navy plane. I observed hundreds—hundreds—of foreign fishing vessels—factory trawlers—between those two islands off our coast. They were catching Alaska's seafood. As a matter of fact, they were beyond the 3-mile limit. They were in international waters at that time.

Subsequently, I asked the Coast Guard, and I think the Fish and Wildlife Service then, to take some photographs of those vessels. We found, after examining photographs, that on the top of the vessels, on the decks, there were pens, literally, where they would toss a fur seal here and a harbor seal there, and a baby sea lion there. And then there was what we called a "glory hole" in the center, and they just shoved all of the fish into that hole. And it was ground up and sent back into the world's economy as protein. None of it came ashore in the United States or Alaska.

That appalled me. I came back and we worked with people in the House. We devised a bill and introduced it to claim the 200 miles off our shore for the protection of the marine resources. That did not pass that year.

The next year, I asked my good friend, Senator Warren Magnuson of Washington, and he introduced the bill as chairman of the Commerce Committee. I was cosponsor. But we worked to get that bill passed.

By 1976, that bill was passed. We obtained control over the 200 miles off our shore. In that process we started the concept of Americanizing the 200 mile zone so we could get better con-

trol over the vessels that harvested our fish.

The grand story of the whole continuum since 1976 is the pollock and cod of the North Pacific. Pollock and cod were at that time a fairly insignificant fishery. They were taking probably 10–20 million pounds a year—a little bit more—and would bring it ashore here into our country.

But the difficulty with pollock is, it must be fleshed and boned soon after it is caught. It turns into a wonderful, white protein. The Japanese use it as surimi. We use pollock and cod as fillets and in fish sticks. If you go to Long John Silver's or McDonald's, any one of those entities today to buy a fish sandwich, there is a 9 out of 10 chance you are going to be eating Alaskan pollock.

But here is the beauty of the control mechanism we set up over the 200-mile limit. Pollock in the North Pacific is cannibalistic. I have said that on the floor before. As they mature, they get lazy, do not want to forage for food, and they eat their young. We found that if you harvest the mature fish—take them to market—the biomass expands.

The biomass of Alaskan pollock is about five times the size it was when we created the 200-mile limit. It now sustains the most enormous fishery in the world. It is a vital necessity to the economy of the Pacific Northwest and an absolute necessity to our State.

By virtue of an action taken just recently, the administration has now denied access to Alaskan pollock and cod, to the extent that about 1,000 boats will not fish in January who would otherwise go out and start fishing.

The Department of Commerce released, last Friday, a biological opinion on the relationship between the Steller sea lion and the Alaskan groundfish fleet. This 588-page document contains a massive rewrite of the fishery management plan for the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries.

Mind you, under the Magnuson Act—it is now called the Magnuson-Stevens Act—but under that Act that commenced in 1976, the duty to create fishery management plans for the areas off our shore lies in the regional councils. Alaska is the only State that has its own council—because of the massive area of our State; more than half the coastline of the United States is in Alaska—we have a regional council.

As I mentioned, the duty to prepare fishery management plans under Federal law is in the regional councils.